

Speech Therapy Time

Terri Walker (B. Sp. Thy.)
Level 1, The Gap Village Shopping Centre
1000 Waterworks Road

THE GAP Q 4061
Phone: 38570074
Fax: 38570073

Hello!

My name is Terri Walker and I am a Private Speech Pathologist based at The Gap. I have had over 30 years experience as a Speech Pathologist and today I want to talk to you about the sounds that your child says.

Do all children conquer sounds in the same way?

The best way to answer this is to say that MOST children develop sounds in the same way. All of the English sounds aren't mastered until children are around 8 years of age! Here is a developmental list of the sounds that children should be saying at each age (approximately):

Age in years	Sounds that should be clear
3 years	h/zh (like mea <u>s</u> ure)/y/w /ng/n/m/p/t/k/b/g/d
3 years 6 months	/f/
4 years	/l/sh/ch/
4 years 6 months	/j/s/z/
5 years	/r/
6 years	/v/
8 years	/th/

If your child has just hit the age for a sound to develop, then give them a few months to conquer that sound before beginning to worry.

There are also some rules that children use.

As they conquer the above sounds – there are also some rules that children gain as they get older:

Age in years	Rule that disappear at this age
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> voicing eg pig = big devoicing eg pig = pick stopping /f/ and /s/ eg fish = tish; soap = doap
3 years 3 months	final consonant deletion eg house = hou_
3 years 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fronting eg car=tar and go = do (only at the beginning of the word) stopping /v/ and /z/ eg very = berry; zoo = doo
3 years 9 months	consonant harmony eg mine = mime; kittycat = tittytat
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak syllable deletion eg elephant = efant cluster reduction eg spoon = poon
4 years 6 months	stopping /sh/,j/and /ch/ eg shop = dop; jump = dump; chair = tair
5 years	stopping voiced and voiceless /th/ eg thing = ting; them = dem

No-one knows definitively what causes speech problems in each child but some documented causes are:

- extensive language difficulties
- a history of hearing difficulties
- a weakness in motor speech control

Intelligibility refers to the “clarity” of your child’s talking ie how easy is it for people, *other than the immediate family*, to understand what they are saying. As a general rule of thumb:

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- by 18 months a child is normally 25% intelligible (ie strangers will understand them about 1/4 of the time)
- by 24 months a child is 50-75% intelligible (ie strangers will understand them about 1/2 of the time)
- by 36 months a child is 74-100% intelligible (ie strangers will understand them about 3/4 of the time)
- by aged 4 strangers should be able to understand nearly everything your child says

There are some red flags you should watch out for  that with the development of your child's speech:

-  A history of limited babbling sounds as a baby.
-  A history of difficulties with breastfeeding and difficulties transitioning to solids.
-  Overuse of one or 2 sounds eg /d/ used for /k/g/s/sh/ch/j/.
-  Omission of sounds at the beginning, middle or end of words.
-  A history of middle ear problems as a baby or toddler.
-  Delayed sound production according to the table above.
-  Persistence of phonological rules beyond the expected age according to the table above.

 An unusual sound production (eg a really "slushy" /s/ sound)

 An unusual sound substitution eg a /h/ for a /p/ sound so pig = hig. This tends to make children much more difficult to understand by strangers (ie their intelligibility is not as good as you would normally expect for their age)

If you are concerned about your child's speech production – your first valuable resource is your child's teacher. Teachers are familiar with the speech development of a large number of children at this age and can give you more insight into whether your child's speech needs an assessment and possibly intervention.

If you or your child's teacher have any concerns over your child's early speech sound development then please feel free to contact me or any Speech Pathologist to organise an appointment:
Terri Walker
Speech Therapy Time
(working out of Young Minds Rooms)
Level 1 The Gap Shopping Centre
Waterworks Rd, The Gap
38570074